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amnesty international

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Syria/HM/TH

Mr Salem Azzam
Secretary General
Islamic Council of Europe
16 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW1 7EP

15 July 1980

Dear Mr Azzam,

Thank you for your letter of 9 July bringing to our attention the worsening human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Amnesty International has on several occasions over the past few months expressed its concerns with violations of human rights in Syria and particularly with the growing number of executions. Amnesty International, as you are aware, is committed by its Statute to oppose "by all appropriate means the imposition and infliction" of the death penalty, on the grounds that it violates the right to life and that it is the most cruel, inhuman and degrading of all forms of punishment.

I am enclosing with this letter some of the material produced by our Research Department over the past year as I am sure you will find it of interest. This includes;

- Two Urgent Actions in June 1979 on behalf of 14 persons sentenced to death in Aleppo and 15 others executed in Damascus.
- A Briefing Paper on the Syrian Arab Republic published on 24 October 1979 and outlining our main concerns.
- A News Release on 30 January 1980 based on a telegram to President Hafez Assad calling for human rights assurances from the Syrian government.
- A News Release on 25 April 1980 publicising reports of large-scale arrests and summary executions which Amnesty International had received.

As you will also appreciate we have continued to communicate our concerns to the Syrian authorities through less publicised means and shall continue to do so in the future.

I thank you once again for bringing these matters to our attention and assure you that Amnesty International will continue to work throughout the world against the detention of Prisoners of Conscience and to campaign against torture and for the total abolition of the death penalty.

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

Thomas Hammarberg
Secretary General

Amnesty International is a worldwide human rights movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, sex, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and the death penalty in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of all governments, political factions, ideologies, economic interests and religious creeds. It is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. Amnesty International has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC), UNESCO and the Council of Europe, has operative relations with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of